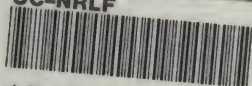
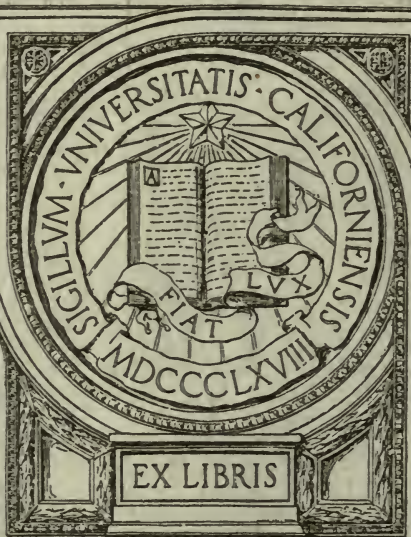


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The Battle of the North Sea in 1914

By Rear Admiral Sir S. EARDLEY-WILMOT ("Searchlight")

Author of "Our Navy for a Thousand Years," "Our Fleet To-day," etc.



SECOND EDITION

HUGH REES, LTD.

5 Regent Street, Pall Mall, S.W.

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("SEARCHLIGHT")

AUTHOR OF "OUR NAVY FOR A THOUSAND YEARS"
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CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. WAR DECLARED	5
II. THE TRIPLE ALLIANCE	11
III. THE GERMAN NAVY	14
IV. THE BRITISH FLEET	20
V. READINESS FOR WAR	37
VI. WAR BEGINS	42
VII. THE BATTLE OF THE NORTH SEA	55
VIII. AFTER THE BATTLE	69

THE BATTLE OF THE NORTH SEA IN 1914

I

WAR DECLARED

REVIEWING the various causes which have produced great wars between nations, one is struck by their trivial nature in many of those most fiercely contested. The lamentable conflict between France and Germany in 1870, the memory of which hovered so long like a menacing cloud over the peace of Europe, hinged more upon the method of presenting and receiving a despatch than upon its contents. Many other instances might be quoted. The fact is that when circumstances lead different communities to view each other with dislike, due perhaps to imaginary grievances, a small incident may so inflame their minds as to lead to a result wholly disproportionate to the exciting cause. Civilisation gives individuals an alternative to force in most quarrels, but so far has failed to provide an international tribunal for the adjustment of every dispute between

6 THE BATTLE OF THE NORTH SEA

nations. Submission to arbitration is resisted where it is considered national honour is concerned, though individual honour seeks and finds redress in the law courts.

Twenty years ago the idea of war between Great Britain and Germany seemed impossible. Indeed our whole concern then was to guard against a possible struggle with France and Russia, countries which might legitimately have felt aggrieved against us. We had fought against both, and not been worsted; supported Turkey against one, and, having opposed the construction of the Suez Canal when de Lesseps sought our help, we gradually became predominant in Egypt. With Germany, on the other hand, we were allied by memories of mutual help against aggression.

When Blücher came to England after Waterloo, he received an ovation only equalled by that to Wellington. In case of a powerful combination against us, might not we again expect support from such a quarter? After the events of 1870, what more natural than to provide a Fleet worthy of a united Germany? Though that issue was decided on land, the humiliation remained of having seen a hostile squadron off their coast, without ability to meet it, or afford protection to a commerce at sea already of considerable bulk and value. We had fostered her small Navy from its earliest days. A British frigate exchanged for two small steamers trained Prussian seamen over fifty years ago. We welcomed, therefore, the con-

struction and acquisition of battleships by our former ally.

What a change in twenty years! England, France, and Russia, no longer viewing each other with scarcely veiled hostility, now on the best of terms, all sources of difference between them removed; while the old friend is the enemy of to-day. How had this come to pass? No portion of our Empire had been wrested at any time from Germany. We sympathised with but gave no help to France in 1870. Denmark received no assistance from us in her struggle with Prussia and Austria in 1864. Heligoland passed from British to German rule in a peaceful exchange. Where the cause, then, for hostility? That it existed became very apparent during our war in South Africa. British residents in and visitors to Germany at that time had unpleasant experiences of this feeling. But for our command of the sea, it would not, probably, have found expression only in abuse. Then commercial rivalry arose as it had three hundred years before with England and Holland. The Dutch were then the waggoners of all seas, and had the best places in the sun. Germany now aspired to some of the good things. With a growing population and commerce, she sought expansion over sea, and found all suitable sites occupied, chiefly by Great Britain. In nearly every trading and important port, the Union Jack or Red Ensign was conspicuous. The sum of individual jealousy becomes national envy.

8 THE BATTLE OF THE NORTH SEA

Finally the old question of rivalry in power kindled the smouldering fire which culminated in a blaze. Originally based, no doubt, on capability to meet any Continental Navy, the advance of the German Fleet after 1900 seemed destined for a greater object, and to constitute a menace to that sea supremacy essential to the existence of the British Empire. We might put the case to her in this way: You can only be overcome on land. No Fleet will avail if your soldiers are defeated. Therefore we are not concerned if you consider it necessary to provide an Army of five or even ten millions of men. We, on the other hand, would lose everything if overcome at sea, and therefore must have such an overwhelmingly superior Navy that its defeat could only be accomplished by an almost impossible combination against us. This line of argument is not accepted, and the answer given over fifty years ago by a French Admiral, when a similar question between France and England had cropped up, would probably apply to-day. Writing to Captain Mends—a friend made during the Russian War—Admiral Jurien de la Gravière in 1860 says:

“At heart the French and English wish on nearly all questions the same things. The great subject of disagreement is the increase which each nation is making in her Navy. You wish to be incontestably masters of the sea, and to fear neither us nor any maritime coalition. We do not object to this pretension up to a certain point.

We do not wish, however, that your security should be such that you should imagine yourself able to treat us in any way you like. Suppose, for instance, your naval supremacy enabled you to come without much effort and blockade our commercial ports, ravage our coasts, insult our naval ports. Do you not think that we should have as much reason as yourselves to be as discontented and anxious as you are when menaced with an *impossible* invasion? How then are we to avoid such a danger if not by increasing our Navy?"

Under these circumstances agreement as to a limitation of armaments is impossible, because neither party will accept a preliminary standard on which negotiations can proceed. Napoleon III. put the matter in a nutshell. When vexed by representations from Lord Palmerston that he was building ships too fast, he said to our Ambassador, "Let each build what he considers the right number," and he added that we were entitled to have many more ships than France, as they were our principal protection.

What actually brought about a conflict between Great Britain and Germany in the autumn of 1914 may now appear trivial—the arrest and imprisonment of innocent people on a charge of espionage. This had little foundation beyond the use of a camera in certain places, for the benefit of an enterprising journal. For some time, however, there had been a recurrence of these incidents, until the indignation of the British people forced the Government to energetic action. A temperate

10 THE BATTLE OF THE NORTH SEA

but firm demand for redress was met by a decided refusal, while certain movements of the German Fleet for a short time previously gave clear indication that Germany fully realised the position. It was her selected moment, and when our Ambassador, acting under instructions, informed the Emperor that, failing to obtain satisfaction, our naval and military forces had been directed to operate against His Majesty's Fleet and commerce, his calm reception of the intimation indicated no alarm. On the contrary he could claim a first success—a diplomatic one—that the declaration of war had not emanated from his country.

The policy of Bismarck had survived its great exponent.

II

THE TRIPLE ALLIANCE

It may be asked, Why select such a moment to try conclusions with a Power hitherto acknowledged as supreme at sea?

Three or four years later the High Seas Fleet would have attained its maximum strength, and included many more battleships of modern construction. The fact is, further delay would give no advantage—rather the reverse. Many wondered to see France allowing year by year her splendid Navy of the past to fall from the proud position of second in the world, and her statesmen apparently content with a fourth place. At the Ministry of Marine one still sees the desk used by Colbert, who did so much for the French Navy, but the spirit of that great man seemed no longer to animate his successors. An eloquent and energetic Minister had, however, aroused the country, which had passed with unanimous enthusiasm a Naval Increase Bill which would give France forty battleships in a few years. Her Fleet was even now rapidly regaining lost ground.

France's ally also had set out in earnest to rehabilitate her naval forces. The officer charged

12 THE BATTLE OF THE NORTH SEA

with this duty in Russia, having in the war with Japan observed the causes which led to reverses, set himself energetically to remove them, and the country, satisfied that laxity would no longer be tolerated, willingly granted a large sum towards a new Fleet. The dual alliance seemed likely ere long to be as powerful at sea as the triple combination. Supported by Great Britain, it might well be invincible. The "wait and see" policy did not commend itself to the head of the combination. Italy and Austria had each loyally carried out their part of the compact in providing *Dreadnoughts*; but the fact which struck outsiders was that the utterances of the Press and prominent men in both countries seemed to urge the necessity of not allowing either Power to predominate over the other in the Adriatic. Indeed, instead of being affectionate allies, they appeared more in the light of distrustful neighbours.

Now the South African War showed we had one sincere friend in Europe—Italy. She retained a vivid recollection of England's friendship and help in her struggles for freedom and unity. When all others turned from us she did not forget the services of Nelson, and British sympathy with Garibaldi. That Italian guns could be ever directed against the ships of King George seemed incredible. We felt assured on this point, and the Mediterranean position did not alarm us, though, in deference to public feeling, we increased our squadron out there. Events justified this confidence. The geographical

position of Italy impels her to be a maritime State. Her coastline, including islands, is about 4,000 miles long, and hence the necessity of a powerful Fleet for its defence. When Sardinia, Tuscany, and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, each having a small separate flotilla of warships, were united, great energy was displayed in giving the new kingdom a Navy adequate to its requirements. Indeed at one time it took the lead in originality of design and clear perception of warship functions. Power and speed characterised such creations as the old *Italia* and *Lepanto*, while the *Piemonte* many years ago attracted great attention as a cruiser of remarkable qualities. After a pause of some duration, owing to financial stress, Italy was again producing warships of novel and powerful design.

Only those brought into contact with the Austrian naval organisation know how excellent it is in all respects. Due largely to the efforts of the Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian, who was placed at the head of the new Navy in 1854, but gave up the work to proceed on his unfortunate mission to Mexico, a like spirit prevailed with his successors. Tegethoff in the war with Denmark, and later with Italy, proved one of the ablest commanders of modern days. His early death at forty-five was a great misfortune to Austria, but his memory and example serve as a stimulus, and the honoured name is borne by a powerful ship in the Fleet.

III

THE GERMAN NAVY

OUR main consideration, however, was the Fleet created by Germany with such wonderful celerity. Did it justify competition with the foremost maritime State? According to many in our country, who had preached this homily for some years, it was not only equal, but superior in ships, training, and organisation, until no wonder the same belief came to be held in Germany. As regards organisation there might be some justification for such a belief, for the Navy has derived advantage in this respect from its connection with the Army. After the Franco-German War an eminent General—Von Stosch, conspicuous as an organiser—was placed at the head of the Navy. He sought to bring the Fleet into line with the Army, and apply as far as possible those methods which had proved successful on land. A well-devised scheme of mobilisation is as necessary to one Service as the other, but it had not up to then received much attention in naval circles. Caprivi—another distinguished General—succeeded Von Stosch, and then came a series of able sea officers who, under the Emperor, took the chief direction of naval affairs. No doubt they received valuable assistance from

the knowledge and interest the Supreme Head had always evinced in matters of the sea. As a boy he desired to serve in the Navy, but the Hohenzollern rule that the Army always claims the eldest son was inexorable. The call of the sea remained, and the Emperor knows the internal economy of a man-of-war as intimately as he does the various regiments which he commands. But the construction of a Fleet of which all the units are the best devised for their particular purpose depends more upon experience than study ; upon practical use and tradition aiding established rule and formula. True as it is to a great extent that men not ships win battles, yet, all else being equal, or approaching equality, a faulty design will turn the scale.

The modest Fleet fixed in 1867 at sixteen battleships was only increased to nineteen in 1897. Then, the appetite rapidly growing, a Fleet of thirty-eight battleships and twenty armoured cruisers is considered essential in 1900. To turn the thirty-eight into forty-one a few years later hardly deserved notice, and ought to alarm nobody ! Equally significant is the increase in dimensions of individual vessels, especially in the last decade. Between 1897 and 1902 were completed ten battleships of from 11,000 to 12,000 tons—the *Barbarossa* and *Wittelsbach* groups. They carried four 9½-inch guns, and fourteen to eighteen 6-inch guns. For some reason, while other countries considered a 12-inch or 13-inch calibre essential, the German authorities were satisfied with a much

16 THE BATTLE OF THE NORTH SEA

lighter piece. Then, as if doubtful of this choice, the next two groups of ten battleships—*Elsass* and *Deutschland*—constructed between 1903 and 1907, are given a displacement of 13,000 tons, the armament consisting of four 11-inch and fourteen 7-inch guns. These are the pre-*Dreadnought* portion of the Fleet, and it is apparent that, as far as equipment goes, they are much inferior to British vessels built during the same period.

After 1907 a great advance takes place. Of course if her Fleet should ever be called upon to meet that of any State, without exception, Germany must have as good weapons. When, therefore, England produced a *Dreadnought*, it led to a complete change in the policy actuating German warship construction. This necessitated expansion of existing resources and reconsideration of previous designs, all requiring time to develop, so that a temporary check in construction ensued. The outcome of all this was an increase from 13,000 to 18,000 tons, and an equipment of twelve 11-inch and twelve 6-inch guns. The big guns were disposed in pairs: one pair at each end and two on each side. As the latter were opposite each other, four of the twelve guns would not be available when engaging a single enemy on either broadside. This design also differed from the *Dreadnought* in the addition of a secondary armament. The 6-inch guns were located six on each side, below the big ordnance. Hence the broadside fire comprises eight 11-inch and six 6-inch guns, as compared

with the eight 12-inch guns of the *Dreadnought*. I shall venture to deal with the advantages or otherwise of this arrangement later on. Four vessels, the *Nassau*, *Westfalen*, *Posen*, and *Rheinland*, were constructed on this principle and completed in 1910. In the next four—*Ostfriesland*, *Helgoland*, *Thuringen*, and *Oldenburg*—though considerably larger—22,400 tons—completed in 1911 and 1912, the same general design is followed, but 12-inch guns take the place of the 11-inch, and two more 6-inch guns are added. These eight battleships form a powerful squadron; its principal defect being that in action, unless engaging an enemy on both sides, a large number of its guns would be inactive. Too much is sacrificed to provide for an unusual occurrence.

Arriving apparently at this conclusion, we find a great change in the design of succeeding German battleships. The number of 12-inch guns is reduced to ten, mounted in double gun turrets, one forward and two aft on the centre line; while the other two are placed amidships and diagonally across the vessel, so that the guns in both of them can fire on either side. To obtain stern fire from the two after-turrets the guns of the inner turret are mounted sufficiently high to fire over its neighbour. All ten guns can thus be directed on either side, while bow and stern fire is considerable. The secondary armament of fourteen 6-inch guns is arranged as in preceding ships. Such are the leading features of the eight battleships of the

18 THE BATTLE OF THE NORTH SEA

Kaiser class completed between 1912 and 1914. What a wonderful evolution in a few years from the 11,000-ton *Barbarossa* to the 24,000-ton *Kaiser* ! How limit the aspirations of a country capable of such an achievement ?

In the type ineptly termed battle-cruiser, equal progress is observed. The original Navy Act provided for twenty armoured cruisers ; and a few of from 8,000 to 12,000 tons—armed with 8-inch or 9½-inch guns, as well as 6-inch—had joined the Fleet when battle-cruisers came into fashion. Unaware of their dimensions, owing to the secrecy observed when producing our *Invincible* class, Germany started with a 15,000-ton *Blücher*, carrying twelve 8-inch guns, but then turned out the *Von der Tann* of 18,700 tons, carrying eight 11-inch and ten 6-inch guns. She was followed by the *Moltke*, *Goeben*, and others with increased power and speed. Of smaller cruisers Germany possessed about thirty with a speed of 20 knots and upwards. This class is not built in such numbers as formerly : as with steamers size is essential for speed in rough weather, and to carry sufficient fuel for cruising. These attributes enable big liners to traverse the oceans with a speed and punctuality rarely disturbed by wind or sea. Armed with a few light guns they are capable of acting as auxiliary cruisers, for the interruption of an enemy's commerce or the protection of their own against similar attempts.

If in her battleship and cruiser construction Germany shows she has much yet to learn, it

may be frankly conceded that in her torpedo flotilla and the organisation for its use she cannot be surpassed. Her torpedo boats are numerous, the exercise with them continuous and of a practical nature. Nor is she dependent on any other country for their supply. Those built by Schichau are equal to any produced elsewhere.

As regards guns, those made by Krupp are famous all over the world. A factory was first established at Essen in 1810, and Frederick Krupp appointed manager in 1826. Twenty years later he became proprietor of the works. Since then they have immensely increased, with a fine experimental range at Meppen. Some trials there in 1882 contributed considerably to the reconstruction of our own naval ordnance.

However excellent the *matériel* of a Fleet, it cannot exercise so much influence on the day of battle as the efficiency of the personnel. That efficiency will depend greatly on discipline and training. In both respects the German Navy stands high. The officers are animated by a lofty sense of duty; their men are well instructed and directed. The active service of the majority of the seamen is, however, so limited according to the law of recruiting, that the work of training devolving on the officers is exceedingly arduous. They envy the British Navy its long-service system. Its advantages are apparent in time of stress and unusual difficulty. Never was this exemplified in more forcible fashion than at this particular juncture.

IV

THE BRITISH FLEET

THE modern *Dreadnought* is about the only epoch-making change in naval armaments originating in Great Britain. France produced the first iron-clad; America the first turret ship. It is only thirty years since we mounted breechloading guns afloat. Dislike to change and mistrust of innovation have at all times influenced British naval policy—fortunately without ill result, for the great manufacturing resources of the country have always enabled it to speedily overtake arrears when the change took place. Old Navies are essentially conservative in minor as well as greater issues. It only became permissible for a British seaman to discard the razor about forty years ago. Even then to see an Admiral with a beard raised doubts as to his respectability or professional capacity. As with beards so with steam, paddle-wheels, and then the screw propeller. All were admitted with reluctance, and boarding-pikes continued to be issued to ships until a few years ago.

How, therefore, has the *Dreadnought* been evolved, and on what reasoning? The old broadside iron-clad and the low freeboard turret ship had by

1880 resulted in a compromise in which each system was represented—a ship with a pair of heavy guns at each end and a broadside armament of light pieces amidships. As armoured vessels almost universally had a considerable area of their hulls unprotected, small shell would create considerable havoc in this portion. From all time it had been considered that a number of guns fired together as a broadside would have greater effect than if discharged singly or independently. Nay more—if possible all the shot should strike in the same place, as one projectile. To attain this the guns were converged for certain distances where their projectiles would meet. Concentrated broadside firing was a favourite exercise with the old wooden men-of-war carrying from twenty-five to fifty guns on their broadsides. Twenty-five 32-pound shot meant an aggregate weight of 800 pound of iron striking the ship. Now, if you put these twenty odd comparatively small pieces into a single big gun discharging a projectile of 800 pounds, you have the concentrated broadside in a very effective form, for with a successful shot all the metal strikes in one place. But if it misses all miss, whereas with the old broadside some might get home. The provision for this is in duplicating, triplicating, or quadruplicating your big pieces. Concentration of metal gives the effective “punch,” to use an expression used in the boxing arena. When a man was sought to compete with Johnson, the coloured pugilist, choice fell upon one noted

22 THE BATTLE OF THE NORTH SEA

for his terrific punch in former times. But the piece had become antiquated: bore perhaps worn too much, and the punch lacked its old *vis viva*. The principle, however, remains correct. It is not merely a question of penetrating armour, for a medium gun would do this at ordinary ranges, but the tremendous effect of an 800 or 1,200 pound shell bursting inside the ship. We have a vivid description of this in a Russian account of the Battle of Tsushima, where the writer likens the Japanese 12-inch shell to portmanteaus being hurled on board. They gradually disregarded impact of the smaller missiles, as a man would ignore a pea-shooter when exposed to the fire of a rifle.

Again, the heavier projectiles maintain their speed through the air better than those discharged from light ordnance with the same initial velocity, and consequently arrive more quickly at their destination. A difference of one second even may lose a hit, for an object steaming at a speed of 18 knots an hour moves 30 feet in one second. It is unnecessary to dwell upon the disadvantages of having several descriptions of ammunition, difficulties of ranging and fire control, when different types of guns are carried. Full consideration of all to be said for and against resulted in the dual armament being abandoned, and the gun-power concentrated in ten 12-inch guns mounted in pairs as heretofore in five turrets, or gun-houses; three on the centre or keel line, and one on each broadside opposite each other: thus eight guns could be

concentrated on either side, while six could fire ahead or astern.

Before proceeding further let us compare this disposition with what had gone before. The dual armament of 12-inch and 6-inch guns—four and twelve of each respectively—was mounted in twenty-eight battleships completed between 1895 and 1904: Nine *Majestics* and eight *Formidables* of 15,000 tons, six *Oceans* and five *Duncans* of 13,000 to 14,000 tons. Their value for many years consisted in the fact that all carried 12-inch guns, with other good qualities. In seeking then to develop further the gun-power we were led to follow the example of some other nations by giving a triple armament to eight vessels. The *King Edward VII.* group carry, in addition to the four 12-inch guns, four of 9·2 inch and ten of 6 inch. The advantage of this mixture is not apparent. Alternatives lay in either replacing the 6-inch entirely with such a piece as the 7½-inch, or more 9·2-inch guns. The latter was adopted in the last two ships designed before the *Dreadnought*. In the *Agamemnon* and *Lord Nelson* the displacement is increased to 16,500 tons and the armament to four 12-inch and ten 9·2-inch guns. Had it been possible to mount these ten pieces so that all could fire on either beam, a broadside discharge of four 12-inch and ten 9·2-inch projectiles would have compared not unfavourably with later conceptions. Carried, as they are, so that only half of them are available on either side, few can contest the

enhanced power given by the all-one-calibre system as exemplified by the *Dreadnought*, even though it entailed an additional displacement of 1,400 tons.

Other novel features characterised that battleship. We had adopted water-tube boilers some time previously, but now associated with them turbine propulsion, giving the unusual speed for a battleship of 21 knots an hour. Some questioned the wisdom of this, and would have preferred the extra weight of propulsive machinery involved being given to more armour protection. It is important no doubt to get quickly into action, but still more essential to remain there on arrival and to emerge triumphant. If you have sacrificed a gun or an inch of armour to be fleet of foot, the extra knot may be dearly gained. The main point is to give each attribute of a warship its due place according to the duty required of her.

Besides her 12-inch equipment the *Dreadnought* carried a number of 12-pounder quick-fire guns for repelling torpedo attack. We had adopted this gun some time previously in place of the 6-pounder. But torpedo craft now attained to such dimensions that something even heavier became necessary to stop them before they could reach torpedo range, so a 4-inch gun throwing a 25-pound projectile superseded the 12-pounder.

Six other vessels were constructed on the *Dreadnought* design, *Superb*, *Bellerophon*, *Temeraire*, *St. Vincent*, *Collingwood*, and *Vanguard*. One defect in them is masking a pair of guns by the two turrets

on the side being exactly opposite each other. To obviate this additional length of ship is necessary, and then these turrets can be placed diagonally across. This is carried out in three ships next constructed—*Neptune*, *Hercules*, and *Colossus*—while the two after-turrets are brought closer together and the inner one raised so that its guns can be discharged right astern over the other. Thus all ten guns command either side, and eight can be directed right astern. The increased length and breadth has brought the displacement up to 20,000 tons; a size not contemplated ten years previously.

As long as Germany had restricted her ship armaments to 11-inch guns we continued to equip our vessels with the 12-inch. When that country advanced to this calibre we decided upon a more powerful weapon and adopted the 13½-inch gun. In place of an 850-pound shot the projectile weighs 1,250 pounds, or over half a ton, which means a terrific punch if correctly timed and aimed. Adhering to ten, as the largest number of guns to be efficiently located and controlled, an alteration was made in the position of the five turrets. All are placed on the centre line of the ship, two at each end and one amidships. To increase bow and stern fire, the inner end turrets are raised so that their guns can discharge over the outer positions. We thus revert to the original idea of a turret ship as first put forward by Captain Cowper Coles and carried out in the old *Devastation*, except in having

26 THE BATTLE OF THE NORTH SEA

some of the turrets at higher level than the others, and more of them. To an outsider this appears to constitute an element of weakness, for the end turrets are so close together as to afford a conspicuous target for an enemy's projectiles. Dispersion of gun-positions is desirable to prevent the probability of any considerable portion being disabled together. Many therefore preferred a design first embodied in what is officially termed a battle-cruiser. Of course it is a misnomer. As well speak of a line-of-battle frigate, but, authority having named the infant, we must conform to it. To any objection we should receive the reply of the Waxworks Showman in one, I think, of Artemus Ward's books. The Showman having exhibited a figure as Napoleon Bonaparte—or some other celebrity—produced later the same figure and announced it as Sir Edmund Head—many years ago a high official in Canada. On a mild remonstrance from the audience that it was not that individual the Showman replied with indifference, "Well, I calls him Sir Edmund 'Ead; you may call him what you darn well please." So with the battle-cruiser. After all, it is what a craft can do, not how she is classified, which matters. If a vessel can fulfil the functions of a cruiser as well as take her place in line of battle so much the better.

The building programme of 1905 which produced the *Dreadnought* included three vessels believed for some time to be ordinary armoured cruisers, their design being kept secret. Previously details

of warships were given out soon after construction commenced. We do not find on the Continent the adoption of a new field-gun or rifle is announced with full particulars for the benefit of the rest of the world. Our procedure was not without advantage, as most people now admit.

The *Inflexible*, *Invincible*, and *Indomitable*, thus enshrouded in mystery, were modified *Dreadnoughts*, armed on the same principle with 12-inch guns only—but carrying eight instead of ten—in four positions: a pair at each end and a pair on each broadside, not opposite to each other, but placed diagonally across the vessel so as not to mask each other's fire on the beam. A longer vessel allowed this arrangement, while a reduced amount of armour also permitted machinery of vast power to be installed. The result was a craft superior in speed, not only to any cruiser afloat, but also to any of the big steamers capable of crossing the Atlantic at a rate of over 22 knots an hour. This is a change of immense significance. Formerly cruisers were slower than the majority of merchant steamers except "tramps," which led to all nations seeing in the fastest of these trading craft, if armed with a few light guns, a formidable method of operating against the ocean commerce of an enemy. As auxiliary cruisers they might emulate the *Alabama* and do immense mischief before capture. They could not pass, however, a certain limit of speed, for then the expense of running them became pro-

28 THE BATTLE OF THE NORTH SEA

hibitive. When, therefore, strategists said cruiser speeds must be developed at all costs, and science enabled them to be constructed emulating in that direction a torpedo-boat destroyer, the value of the armed merchant steamer materially diminished; for it could be hunted and overtaken by the huge cruiser with vastly superior armament. The small steam cruiser also suffers in comparison, thus reversing the position held by frigates and corvettes of old, when the small ship outsailed the two- and three-decker. A sensible decline, therefore, took place in the construction of second-class cruisers at this time.

Now a craft like the *Inflexible*, armed with eight 12-inch guns, can take her place in the line of battle. She is practically a fast battleship, and, associated with others of similar qualities, they would form such a squadron of observation as Nelson employed to advantage with fast sailing two-deckers when off Cadiz in 1805.

Then how useful the big cruiser for reconnaissance. To push this home and observe well you must approach near enough. Armour is sight; size is speed. The one enables close observation; the other brings you back safely with accurate information. The small cruiser is easily driven off, captured, or sunk before getting to close quarters.

The *Indefatigable* is 25 feet longer than the *Indomitable*, which enables the two middle turrets to be placed farther apart—a considerable improvement—otherwise she has a similar equipment. In

her successors the *Lion*, *Princess Royal*, and *Queen Mary*, even longer, larger, and faster vessels, the four turrets are placed on the centre line, the second one from forward being close to and its guns firing over the foremost turret. Instead of 12-inch guns all eight are of 13½-inch calibre, adding immensely to the power of the armament. The water-line protection consists of 9-inch plating instead of 7-inch as placed on the previous vessels. Whether the advantages of having all turrets on the centre line compensate for placing two of them so close together as to afford a conspicuous target is open to question. Not a few prefer the *Indefatigable* system.

Besides their big ordnance all classes have light guns to keep off torpedo attack, and carry torpedoes for use if opportunity occurs. We may therefore consider the value of this weapon as compared with the gun. It is a hundred years since Fulton first put forward his idea of destroying or disabling a ship by exploding a charge of gunpowder against her hull under water. The difficulty was to get it there without detection ; but on more than one occasion this had been effected by fixing the charge at the end of a long pole projecting from the bow of a boat. It would take too long to recount all the attempts made in actual warfare with this form of under-water attack. It lasted until a less hazardous method could be found ; until in fact the charge could be brought in contact without approaching so near the vessel. The Whitehead torpedo fulfilled this condition.

30 THE BATTLE OF THE NORTH SEA

It was a small submarine boat without any crew, propelled by machinery which, once started, did not require any attention, and carrying in its nose a large charge of explosive which ignited automatically on striking the vessel. The fuel selected for driving the engines was air compressed to a high degree of tension, and the engines caused an ordinary propeller to revolve, giving forward motion. Now compressed air has an appreciable weight, so that on being consumed the torpedo became lighter and more buoyant. This tended to bring it to the surface. An explosion on the surface would lose nearly all its effect ; so an ingenious apparatus was applied, acting on horizontal rudders, which corrected this tendency, and enabled any desired depth to be maintained. I have heard the inventor, Mr. Robert Whitehead, spent seven years working out these details, and even then it was imperfect as regards directive power and speed. It gave evidence, however, of such possibility that nearly all nations at once adopted it.

This was over thirty-five years ago, and during the interval continuous experiment has resulted in marvellous improvements. Ejected from a craft running fast, the torpedo was deflected by the passing water, and though experience enabled this to be estimated and allowed for, the actual path under water could never be predicted with certainty. The application of a small gyroscope inside the torpedo overcame this defect ; for this instrument ensures the torpedo running in the

direction it is pointed when ejected, whatever the speed of craft and consequent deflective force of the water. This removes one great defect in this weapon : uncertainty of direction. There remains the question of speed. Now the first Whitehead torpedo had only a speed of 10 or 12 knots an hour, which meant that it took two minutes to travel 800 yards. When, however, the late Mr. Peter Brotherhood devised his now celebrated three-cylinder engine, and applied it to the Whitehead torpedo, the speed rose to nearly 20 knots an hour, reducing the time to traverse 800 yards by nearly a minute. This still left much to be desired, and various improvements followed until a speed of over 40 knots an hour for 1,000 yards has been achieved. A reduced speed is necessary for a longer range, to prevent a premature exhaustion of the fuel—the stock of compressed air.

Assume, however, that further improvement results in greater velocity at short distances, and that 40 knots is maintained for 4,000 yards. Aimed at a ship that distance away, the torpedo takes three minutes to reach her. If the ship is steaming at a speed of 20 knots, she will have advanced 2,000 yards during the three minutes, and consequently the torpedo must be directed that distance ahead of her in order to hit. If you have not calculated the enemy's speed accurately by say 2 knots, the torpedo passes 200 yards ahead or astern of her. What fruitful chances of a miss those three minutes give ! Of course, discharged against a line of

32 THE BATTLE OF THE NORTH SEA

ships, one may be struck, and this may justify the attempt—but at 4,000 yards good gunnery ought to quickly decide the action. For the shell from the 12-inch gun covers the distance in about five seconds, during which time the 20-knot ship only advances 11 yards or 33 feet. Allowance is made for this on the sight, but if omitted, and the projectile is aimed at centre of object, a hit is still obtained. No wonder, therefore, the gun remains the premier weapon of naval warfare. It is simplicity itself compared with the internal mechanism of a Whitehead torpedo. The latter has however two very important advantages over its rival. It can be carried by, and discharged from, the smallest craft, and one blow or successful hit is a veritable “knock-out.” When the punch comes off that fight is over. Shot and shell may be kept out by armour above the water-line, but below it thick plating to any extent is debarred, or the hull would not have sufficient buoyancy to float with all the heavy weights it bears. Where the belt armour ends vertically less than an inch of steel has to withstand the shock.

These two characteristics have led to that great development of craft especially adapted to employ this weapon. First the torpedo boat, trusting to speed, darkness, and insignificant dimensions to escape observation before arriving within effective distance to launch its missile: then the destroyer, larger and faster, designed to bring the other to bay; herself eventually equipped to perform the

same function : lastly, the anti-destroyer, a sea-keeping vessel with increased dimensions, speed, and armament, to accompany a Fleet and protect it against the attack of destroyers. It is a veritable chain of destruction. The early torpedo boats had a length of 90 feet and a speed of 20 knots. Longer and faster boats followed. Destroyers began twenty years ago, with a length of 180 feet, a speed of 27 knots, and a displacement of 240 tons. They gradually increased to 800 tons and 32 knots.

It was a task of great magnitude we set in asking for a 36-knot destroyer, and it took longer to produce than a *Dreadnought*. Undertaken by Messrs. Cammell, Laird she appeared in due course as the *Swift* of 1,800 tons ; but I am doubtful if after several trials she exceeded $35\frac{1}{2}$ knots. It is always the last knot which breaks the builder's back. To realise what this speed really means, remember 7 knots equals roughly 8 land miles, so that 35 knots is the speed of a train going 40 miles an hour. One can appreciate the difficulty of hitting with any gun an object approaching at such a rate, even in day-time, and altering her distance 100 yards every five seconds. At night, even with the aid of a searchlight, it seems almost impossible. For searchlights at best are an indifferent auxiliary to gunnery. The rays of the electric arc, even when concentrated into the powerful beam of light by the ingenious mirror of Colonel Mangin, are sadly impeded by mist ; while they cannot pierce a fog at all. Aqueous vapour absorbs most of

the different-coloured rays of which white light is composed, leaving the red rays nearly intact. Hence we often see the sun as a red ball. The electric arc light, being deficient in red rays, has no penetrative power in misty or foggy weather. Interposing red glass in front would not remedy this defect, as no red rays are thereby created; but some substance, giving forth red rays when ignited, if mixed with the carbon sticks used to produce the arc, might improve matters in this respect. Unable to rely, therefore, on stopping the boat at safe distance by these means, our ships have a guard of wire-netting suspended some 20 feet outside them by means of projecting poles to intercept the torpedo before striking the side. This is only effective when the vessel is stationary, as movement through the water tends to bring the nets to the surface; and at any speed they could not be kept in position. We therefore seek to minimise the blow, and keep the ship afloat afterwards, by subdividing her as far as possible into numerous water-tight compartments, so that if one fills with water the others are not flooded. There must always remain, however, large spaces which effective working of the ship in peace or war renders difficult, if not impossible, of subdivision. Can, then, science find no means to protect the vessel against this deadly attack—the effect of 250 pounds of most powerful explosive ignited against her side from 10 to 20 feet below the water-line? There appears but one remedy—

to construct the vessel with a double side, the exterior steel wall to be of sufficient thickness for rigidity and to explode the torpedo on impact. To preserve the internal hull from penetration this outer skin to be about 10 feet from the inner, and the space between filled with pieces of cork or other substance to act as a cushion. When iron replaced wood for war-vessels a double bottom was considered essential in case of striking a rock. This caused less damage to a wooden ship, the softer material being to some extent elastic ; the hole or crack made under these conditions tending to contract as the wood got saturated with water where the damage occurred. It is recorded that on one occasion—about a century ago—a British frigate carried a piece of rock, filched from the sea, across the Atlantic. She struck a pinnacle, which, becoming detached, remained in the hole, gripped and held by the lacerated wood, thus stopping the inflow of water. Its presence was only revealed on docking.

The space between the outer and inner bottoms of iron or steel vessels does not usually exceed 3 or 4 feet, nor extend up to the water-line, so that a large area of side is without even this limited protection. A double side would probably have saved the *Titanic*. To give a space of 10 feet nearly up to the water-line will tax all the naval architect's skill and resources. Some drastic measure is required, for further danger is threatened in this locality by the development of the sub-

marine. Travelling under water, and only coming to the surface occasionally for a brief period to correct its direction, such an object proves most difficult of detection, and as a target almost impossible to hit. No warning is given by sparks or smoke from funnel, nor escaping steam, as when boiler of craft navigating on the surface is worked at highest pressure for the final dash into torpedo range. Though the submarine so far is of small dimensions compared with modern destroyers, and hence has a restricted area of action, every indication points to this being considerably increased in future constructions. Initial difficulties overcome, and confidence gained by experience, the advantages of submarine navigation will produce such progress as science has enabled man to accomplish with aerial flight.

Such are the terrible engines of destruction which nations now employ in naval war. The day had come for their practical application. Who could foresee the result ?

V

READINESS FOR WAR

IF Germany had confidence in the excellence of her Fleet, and the perfection of its organisation for war, she had further justification in embarking upon this struggle by a belief that her opponent was inferior in certain attributes conducive to success at sea. German writers urged that the superior training of their seamen would more than compensate for smaller squadrons. On what foundation this statement was based could not be ascertained ; but it found credence among all classes. Other writers had frequently pointed out the proverbial unreadiness of Great Britain for war. It seemed to have been handed down from that Saxon king nicknamed the Unready. Emerging successful a century before from a tremendous struggle with the dictator of Europe, a long period of peace and prosperity intervened, which led to a neglect of warlike precautions. The outbreak of hostilities with Russia in 1854 exemplified this. We landed in the Crimea without information of the country or strength of force to be encountered. A few years afterwards a British statesman wrote to his Chief:

38 THE BATTLE OF THE NORTH SEA

“ We showed in the Crimean War both our weakness and our strength. Our strength consisted in the elasticity of our resources, the temper of our people, the length of our purse, and our power of endurance. Our weakness was shown in the confusion of our arrangements and the absence of military skill.”

Might not a similar criticism apply to the war in South Africa ? In our numerous small wars weapons of precision turned the scale when opposed to antiquated arms wielded by savage hordes.

Besides recalling these incidents, retired German Generals lectured on naval strategy to their countrymen, who received their utterances as inspired, and British journals reproduced them in bold print. Our own people in fact did not know what to believe, for so-called naval experts in this country, with verbose reiteration, declared no plan for war existed at the Admiralty ; and that our Fleet, though presenting a magnificent array of ships, lacked most of the elements to make it effective when the real thing superseded peace manœuvres. Because the term General Staff had not received adoption in naval phraseology defeat awaited us : when we called an existing department a War Staff a gracious acceptance of this great reform indicated a commutation of the sentence.

Meanwhile the Fleet observed but said nothing. That great silent Navy proceeded steadily with the work of preparation.

Though untried on any great scale since the old

wars, it had sustained its reputation when called upon for any operation independently, or in conjunction with the land forces. What easier to refute than these unfounded assertions, had the officers felt less confidence in the good sense of their countrymen? Every ship contained some one with Admiralty service who knew that preparation for war now engaged its close and continuous attention. They knew that since the formation of an Intelligence Department, nearly thirty years previously, collection of information was combined with study of methods for using it to the best advantage. Its first chief, one of the ablest brains in the Navy, had framed plans of campaign suitable for that period. A skeleton certainly, owing to limitation of staff, but his eminent successors with additional help had filled out the framework, which did not require the awe-inspiring title of War Staff to betoken a readiness previously non-existent. The results of its efforts were not periodically proclaimed in high-sounding phrases to the public through the Press; so the critics professed unbelief and took refuge in vague denunciation. I alluded at the beginning to that spirit of conservatism which renders the British Navy averse to great changes even when required. It requires occasionally a master-mind with relentless purpose to adapt old institutions to present conditions. Action so stimulated may go too far, but the balance of profit and loss is usually satisfactory. A man so endowed the Navy found in Lord Fisher, whose tenure of

40 THE BATTLE OF THE NORTH SEA

office as First Sea Lord produced startling innovations. Greeted with the same outcries which preceded such measures as the Ballot Act, extension of the franchise, disestablishment of the Irish Church, etc., history has yet to record whether the Navy suffered any more from the changes made in it during the first decade of the new century than the country did from the passing of those measures many years earlier. Who to-day would advocate their repeal?

Where again is the evidence of deficient training in officers or seamen? Has the teaching of Sir Geoffrey Hornby, the great proficient in handling a modern Fleet, no influence now? Are the strategical precepts instilled by Sir George Tryon forgotten by his pupils? Does not the example of untiring energy and grasp of a situation so strikingly exhibited in the person of Sir Arthur Wilson still animate those he once ruled? Wait and see.

And the seamen. Has their training not kept pace with the times? Thirty years ago perhaps not, when unimportant exercises had precedence of gunnery, and efficiency took the wrong road. You can make the British bluejacket proficient in anything. Be sure it is the right thing. Emulation will impart extreme vigour to the least romantic operation. The blackened features of officers and men during coaling testify to this. When one or two officers demonstrated what modern guns could achieve at target practice by assiduous attention to training, it begat similar

emulation for a good shooting record, as shifting top-gallant masts did a generation before. Ammunition is no longer wasted by insufficient time for expenditure of the amount prescribed by regulation.

Hardly a day now passes without some gunnery or torpedo exercise, assimilating as far as possible to war conditions. To further this great end stores are not stinted, however costly modern ammunition, for we have to pay more for one round from a 12-inch gun than our ancestors did for a whole broadside of 32-pounders. We settle the bill with a cheerful spirit. In no other frame of mind did the British Navy go out to fulfil its duty.

VI

WAR BEGINS

A DARING EXPLOIT

THE rapidity with which success crowned the efforts of Germany on land in 1866 and 1870 naturally predisposed its ruler to energetic action on the sea when the occasion should arise; this corresponding also with his own impetuous spirit. In a consideration of the various operations which circumstances permitted for overcoming a country situated like Great Britain, two of a decisive nature presented themselves. One was to enforce submission by an interruption of supplies coming to us over sea, which, if energetically carried out and continued without hindrance for two or three months, would cause sufficient distress to render us amenable to any terms. It is unnecessary to quote the percentage of our daily bread obtained from external sources; or the extent to which we are dependent on foreign material to give employment and wages to millions of working men. No one disputes these facts, or that every year, as less wheat is grown at home, the position becomes more serious. It differs, moreover, from former periods when a *guerre de course*, or attack on commerce,

commended itself to our enemies as a potent weapon to employ. It failed then mainly owing to our not losing command of the sea, and though the partial success of corsairs and privateers reduced our wealth, it did not bring immediate hunger, or much increase the distress caused by a state of war generally. For our commerce in those days consisted largely of luxuries, or at any rate articles not absolutely necessary for life. With a population under twenty millions, and more acres devoted to wheat than at present, the poorer classes managed to exist, and in remote parts hardly knew war prevailed. The present condition constituted an unknown factor ; and none could say, before war began, whether in view of the innumerable excellent harbours on the coasts of England, Scotland, and Ireland a considerable check to the entry of supplies was possible. At any rate Germany had determined to make the attempt, if and when a war took place, and to utilise her fastest merchant steamers, converted into auxiliary war-vessels for the purpose. Six with the requisite size and speed were speedily equipped. Invasion was, however, considered the most effective strategy to pursue, certain conditions secured. This accorded with tradition and experience of former wars. Occupation of country and capital would at once bring the struggle to an end. A wise forbearance, not inability, saved Vienna from entry by German soldiers in 1866. The brave defence of Paris in 1870 only delayed the inevitable end.

44 THE BATTLE OF THE NORTH SEA

True the passage across a sea frontier differed materially from the step on land which separates adjacent Continental States, and presented greater difficulties ; but they were not insurmountable. The first Napoleon, while aware of their magnitude, intended undoubtedly to send his army across if his Admirals gave effective support. Therein lay the only difficulty as it appeared to the German strategists, and having detailed the 1st, 2nd, 4th, and 5th Army Corps, amounting to 120,000 men, for this service, they proceeded to the measures for diminishing that superiority at sea, and bringing the two Fleets nearer to equality, without which their own could not risk a battle. Relying on the unremitting care given to make their torpedo flotilla a perfect instrument for attack or defence, three divisions, comprising twenty-four of their newest and fastest destroyers, were given the task of proceeding across the North Sea to attack the main British Home Fleet, then lying just above the Forth Bridge off the new base created at Rosyth. Well served by their numerous agents in England, the German Government had not only accurate knowledge of all movements of our Fleet, but also preliminary notice of the despatch which actually declared war. Anticipating this, the twenty-four destroyers, fully equipped, proceeded a few days earlier up the western coast of Denmark, until arriving in the neighbourhood of Estbjerg, where in a snug but secluded anchorage they awaited the order to proceed. Now Estbjerg is about four

hundred miles from the Forth Bridge, or a twenty hours' run at a moderate speed, leaving sufficient fuel for a spurt at the end and return, if not sunk. Their instructions were of the simplest—to sink or disable all the vessels possible and not quit the spot with a torpedo left to discharge. Everything depended upon these young officers, and they would not fail their country. England's second Fleet, with reserves as mobilised, collected at Dover. Though well sheltered by breakwaters, the harbour, after closing of the western entrance, was easy of access on the eastern side. By acting promptly a similar expedition had a good chance of getting in. If both Fleets had put to sea they were to be found and attacked at all hazards. Another squadron of twelve destroyers, therefore, made their way westward until in the vicinity of the Texel, ready to strike when ordered. Germany could depend upon more than a benevolent neutrality from Holland, critically situated as that country is next door to a powerful neighbour credited with a desire to extend its North Sea coastline, and add another good harbour or two to the Empire.

On this side of the water when affairs became threatening the First Lord of the Admiralty had taken as Chief Naval Councillor a distinguished Admiral, recognised in the Navy and out of it as *facilis princeps* in strategy and tactics. Quick at arriving at a decision, no argument availed to change his views when formed. During a considerable period in command of Fleets, none could

question his unimpaired physical and mental qualities. Like all eminent men he had his peculiarities, one being that a suggestion to him to perform a service at any particular time, or in any method, generally produced a different course of action. This usually harmless idiosyncrasy had a curious effect at this juncture, for the officer in command of the Home Fleet, learning a few days previously the critical state of affairs, wired to headquarters to say he proposed putting to sea. He reckoned without his old chief, for the answer came shortly, "Remain where you are." Which was the wiser course formed a frequent subject for argument after the war. The Commander-in-Chief of the Home Fleet at this time was Sir George Wellicome, an officer of exceptional ability, which had brought him to his present position comparatively early in life. With a wide knowledge of Fleet operations, he took special interest in the working of big guns, so that every ship in his Fleet vied with each other to obtain the best shooting record. Few outside the Service realised the accuracy attained with these huge tubes of steel under skilful guidance and unwearied training. His flag flew in the *Marlborough*, one of our latest super-*Dreadnoughts* and a fitting descendant of that three-decker famous in the sixties of last century. The Fleet present comprised twenty-four battleships, twelve armoured cruisers, six scouts, and thirty destroyers.

The main reason which prompted Sir George's

urgent wire to the Admiralty lay in his desire to get outside before the enemy could drop mines in the manner pursued by the Japanese off Port Arthur. This might precede a declaration of war, but if the first blow took the form of a torpedo attack, a Fleet is not so easily found at sea as in harbour. However he had no option now, so took every defensive measure possible: nets out at sunset, searchlights organised to illuminate the immediate approach, with small guns loaded and directed on certain points. Four cruisers, two scouts, and twelve destroyers formed a patrol outside to give warning of hostile craft making for the harbour. This squadron was relieved by another of similar composition every morning. All vessels received instructions on no account to attempt returning to the anchorage during the dark hours, as anything approaching would be fired upon without warning. As a matter of fact the Germans did not send mine-layers across immediately. They trusted rather to a sudden torpedo attack. Mines only operate if a ship comes to them; a torpedo boat takes the mine to the ship, near or far. Various methods existed also for removing these obstacles expeditiously without the Fleet coming out. The object was to disable him first inside, and the Firth of Forth presented features favourable to such an operation. Indeed the large area of deep water had much influence in its selection as an additional naval base, independent of position on the east coast.

The momentous decision of the British Cabinet—approved by the Sovereign—to discontinue negotiations and resort to force—for both countries declined arbitration—was not reached until after prolonged discussion terminating just before midnight on October 4; and the despatch went off early the next day. By some means, not even now known, the German authorities received earlier information of the rupture, and at once sent orders to the commander of the Northern torpedo flotilla to proceed. He left at five o'clock that morning. This officer—one of the smartest experts in the Service—organised his destroyers in two divisions of twelve each. He intended to make two distinct attacks with about an hour's interval between them. Crediting the enemy with not allowing himself to be taken by surprise, he counted on a certain lull after the first attack, and some scattering of the patrol ships by pursuit of the First Division. A torpedo attack is bound to cause some confusion, of which he hoped to take advantage. If a torpedo only displaced some portion of netting another later might reach the hull itself. He determined to lead the second attack, having great confidence in the skill and determination of his Second in Command. The Navy had no better men than those in charge of these destroyers.

When well clear of the land they settled down to a speed of 20 knots in two columns, avoiding all craft observed in their route. As darkness approached each switched on a small electric light

aft, visible to the craft next astern but not beyond. All had a dynamo with a small searchlight capable on an emergency of illuminating the way in front as a motor-car on a road. In addition each trailed a small white bladder behind, which in foggy weather, by bobbing under the bow of the next astern, prevented loss of touch.

Over a calm sea, a light southerly breeze blowing, the flotilla made uninterrupted progress until ten p.m. They then calculated to be about eighty miles from their object, and the second phase of the plan came into operation. As the chief showed for an instant a bright flare light, the First Division increased their pace so as gradually to work up to full speed for the final charge. They had explicit orders not to swerve from their route, except to avoid a collision; to use guns under certain circumstances only; and to steer for the southern side of the entrance. The leader hoped by this plan any patrolling craft would, on discovering the advance division, collect in that locality, and enable him to approach the northern shore unobserved. He therefore continued at the same rate of speed for another two hours, calculating to be then about ten miles behind his other division, whose fortunes we must now follow.

This at midnight had arrived within thirty miles of the entrance, without mishap, or encountering anything beyond a solitary steamer, evidently bound for a Scandinavian port. They had a full head of steam, fires in good condition, ready at

any moment for a speed of 30 knots. They now wanted it, for shortly afterwards a long black object came in view on their starboard side. It exhibited no light nor sign of life, but they were too close to avoid detection. Almost immediately it seemed to wake up ; two powerful searchlights were directed on them, followed by two rockets, and no doubt remained as to her nature. They were discovered. A brief order, "The utmost speed," had hardly been given when a flash and then the report of a gun, followed by others, announced the struggle had begun.

The vessel proved to be one of the scouts patrolling on a line between Fife Ness and St. Abbs Head, steaming slowly towards the latter point. She at once increased her speed, and steered towards the destroyers. These in single line swept on at a great pace, and the scout, fearing to lose them, finding also her guns produced little effect, changed her course so as to cut through the line. A few minutes sufficed to cover the intervening distance, and she came up to the last destroyer but one. A touch of the helm, and she caught her amidships. A slight crash, a smothered shout, and the unfortunate craft disappeared, the shock being hardly felt on board the scout. Putting the helm hard over without checking speed, she turned towards the spot, and presently observed something floating. It was the end destroyer, disabled and brought to a standstill by the scout's fire just before the collision. Removing the sur-

vivors, and seeing no trace of the other boat, she proceeded towards the harbour. The remaining ten destroyers, little injured, had in the meantime kept straight on. A more severe ordeal awaited them. A wireless message from the scout, indicating nature and direction of attack, and the noise of the firing, enabled the inner patrol to collect on the southern side. A few minutes more and the opposing destroyers came in contact. Then ensued what practically constituted a *mêlée*—a hand-to-hand fight in the dark. No laying off and pounding each other with guns, for the British boats realised close quarters to be the most effective tactics. Each selected an antagonist and made straight for her. Ram or get alongside ; boarding follows collision. A strange scene off that hitherto peaceful coast, and only dimly discernible to those on the spot by the faint light of a half-moon. The roar of big guns had ceased, for they could not be used from ship or shore now without danger to a friend. Only an occasional smash as boat met boat, and the shouts of those engaged—for all were not silent—was heard as the mass of struggling craft passed Inchkeith and approached the Bridge. For the German commanders, faithful to their instructions, steadily held their course, only altering occasionally in the endeavour to avoid a collision. For the rest they neither sought nor evaded a combat, simply stuck to their job like the gallant fellows they were. Of course there was now no semblance of a line ; but compass and the

52 THE BATTLE OF THE NORTH SEA

outline of the land enabled the helmsmen to maintain a correct direction.

Space will not permit giving details of all that happened to each boat. It must suffice to say only three passed under the Forth Bridge, the leader of the expedition and two others. The British craft did not attempt to pursue them farther, and those so engaged turned to assist their comrades.

On the other side of the Bridge the three destroyers saw how little chance remained of effecting their object. They came almost immediately into an illuminated area produced by a number of searchlights fixed and directed on certain arranged portions so as to present no dark space by which the Fleet could be approached. Each section of this area had so many guns allotted to and pointed on it; the exact distance being accurately determined. No doubt could arise as to the nature of any craft appearing—this being forbidden to friends between certain hours—and the firing outside clearly indicated an attack of some nature. No forlorn hope ever started against such tremendous odds, but this small group of destroyers did not flinch. Assailed by a perfect hail of projectiles as they came in view, their career soon terminated. Two sank, while the last boat ran ashore owing to her steering wheel being shot away. After an interval, nothing more appearing, boats were sent to search for any of the crews, and rescued one or two clinging to wreckage. A few

men managed to reach the shore and became prisoners. So far the Admiral could congratulate himself on the excellence of his arrangements. He did not, however, relax any precautions, but, gathering from signals his destroyers outside had suffered severely, directed twelve more to proceed at once to assist them. They needed help indeed, for not many remained capable of further service, but this reinforcement had now other work to do.

As the German leader surmised, and intended they should, the preceding events had drawn most of the British patrol vessels in towards the southern shore. As his division made the land below Fife Ness without observing any vessel, the sound of distant firing on its port bow denoted the success of his plan. Hugging the north shore and travelling at top speed, the Second Division managed to get well into the Forth before they were sighted by a cruiser returning to its station. It was hardly more than a glimpse, and by the time guns and lights came into play the destroyers had disappeared. Rockets, however, warned the Fleet, and the crews, momentarily distracted by the previous exciting episode, stood again to their guns.

The leader of the attacking flotilla had discussed fully with the commander of all the destroyers the different positions in which they might find a Fleet at anchor and how he should treat each condition. On this occasion he determined, if possible, to pass inside it, trusting to find there a less vigilant and efficient guard, especially in view of the other

division's proceedings. Serious opposition now confronted him. Sparks from funnels revealed their presence to the fresh British destroyers proceeding to the other side on their mission. These at once turned and sped across the Forth. Would they be in time? Not to cut off all, or indeed any if the attacking destroyers had been in two parallel columns; but the long single line extended nearly a mile. This enabled the British flotilla, arriving in a scattered group, to cut off and engage the last six boats. These made a gallant defence, but were eventually sunk or captured. The other six passed under the Bridge without accident, and, still keeping the northern shore, the leader saw he could pass inside. Fortune favoured him also, for his course brought him on the outer circumference of the illuminated area, and they got through without serious injury. Steaming down the line, they discharged all their available torpedoes at comparatively short range. The improbability of an attack from this quarter helped them considerably, but before they reached the end of the line and could turn shot and shell began to take effect. Only one boat escaped. Making a wide circle, and keeping close to the other side of the Forth, she managed to evade the defence flotillas—still busily engaged—and got clear away. The leader, alas! perished.

Our naval history records many deeds of exceptional daring, but none surpass, if indeed they equal, this one for heroic and devoted conduct by all concerned in it.

VII

THE BATTLE OF THE NORTH SEA

THOUGH the enemy lost twenty-three destroyers in this bold exploit the Fleet did not come off scatheless. Their wire-netting afforded protection to most vulnerable portions of hull, for on removing it afterwards they found one or two torpedoes entangled in the meshes. This projecting guard, however, does not extend the whole length of side, leaving bow and stern unprotected. Four of the battleships—*Delhi*, *Centurion*, *Monarch*, and *Neptune*—were struck in these parts, and though none of them sank, owing to their water-tight compartments, the damage inflicted was such as to preclude any possibility of further service for a considerable period. Fortunate indeed they had the docks and basin of Rosyth so close at hand, to which tugs conveyed them in due course!

During the night information reached the Commander-in-Chief that the German High Seas Fleet was believed to be at sea; a squadron from Dover would meet him off Flamborough Head, and they were then to proceed in search of the enemy.

At daylight he went out with his whole effective force, the patrol ships joining in succession by signal.

Before following his movements further it is necessary to narrate other events bearing upon these instructions. First as to the division of German destroyers we left at the Texel. Having received orders to proceed about the same time as the Northern flotilla, they kept well out from the land and then steered for the Straits of Dover. In the meantime Sir Thomas Tunnicliffe, in command of the Channel Squadron, urged to join the Rosyth Fleet without delay, left Dover with ten battleships and proceeded north. He left two—*Formidable* and *London*—behind, not having completed coaling, and they followed later, accompanied by six destroyers. Unfortunately they came in contact with the German flotilla off the North Foreland after dark, and, notwithstanding a vigorous defence, the attacking destroyers managed to torpedo both vessels. Of course this is only a bare outline of an operation involving much hard fighting between the small craft; but full details are given in the official despatches, and I must press on to greater events. One result was to prevent the victors doing further damage at present, for only four of the twelve destroyers remained effective.

After a hurried consultation with his subordinates as to state and condition of their commands, the senior officer of the flotilla decided to send some of them home, first landing the most seriously wounded

cases at the nearest neutral port, Ostend, while he himself, with the four least-damaged destroyers, proceeded to a given rendezvous. This action brought out the difficulty of dealing with a number of wounded men in these vessels when away from parent ship or squadron. It also again drew attention to the necessity of devising some means to enable the hull of a large ship to withstand this form of attack.

What had become of the High Seas Fleet? The last information to hand reported it at Wilhelms-haven, but our destroyers sent across on the declaration of war had a fruitless mission, and the work of our mine-layers no immediate result. The explanation is simple. Having cut off all sources by which intelligence could reach this country, the whole Fleet proceeded to Sylt and anchored in the commodious and sheltered inner harbour of Lister Deep. Allowing sufficient time for the torpedo operations I have described, the Fleet then started for a rendezvous in latitude 56° and longitude 4° East. Here in due course arrived the five destroyers, remnants of the two attacks. Their tale caused considerable excitement and satisfaction. Six battleships put out of action. Though the survivors from Rosyth could not testify to the exact damage they inflicted, all heard four distinct explosions and had no doubt as to the class of ship struck. Fortified by this news, and believing his force to be now not inferior to that of the enemy, Admiral Weiss decided to accept a battle as a

prelude to the great operation contemplated. If some of his vessels were comparatively small, and carried lighter guns than most of the British battleships, he knew personnel is the most important factor in contests at sea. In this respect he had no misgivings, being of opinion that German seamen received a more thorough and systematic training than was imparted to British bluejackets. And most of his brother officers agreed with him.

The movements of an army, or smaller military force, are difficult to conceal. The land affords undeniable evidence to vigilant scouting, and much may be gleaned even from unfriendly inhabitants. The sea leaves no trace of a Fleet's passage; a silent plain extending to the horizon and beyond, on which an occasional wayfarer in shape of a passing ship is the sole source of inquiry. This, besides taking time, may send a pursuer in the wrong direction. A steamer is not limited as to route by the wind, like a sailing ship. Consideration of existing and prevailing winds often gave a clue as to destination, at any rate as to what could and could not be done, by ancient Fleets. Yet it is curious how frequently they missed each other, and for long periods; though perhaps not separated by many miles. History teems with instances of this. In 1799 Admiral Bruix got out of Brest with twenty-five sail of the line and ten cruisers, and went south. Lord Bridport, off the port, missed him and went north, thinking Ireland to be

his objective, first sending warning to Lord Keith with fifteen sail off Cadiz. Bruix passed through the Straits of Gibraltar. Lord St. Vincent and Lord Keith started in pursuit, but could hear nothing of Bruix. He put into Toulon, went on to Vado Bay, landed some troops at Savona, retraced his steps to Cartagena, picked up another squadron, passed through the Straits again, put into Cadiz, and finally returned to Brest, unmolested, after a cruise of 110 days. The British force could not get accurate information, and though often close to its object, generally arrived just too late.

Nelson's search for Bonaparte's expedition to Egypt the year previously, in such narrow waters as the Mediterranean, shows how impenetrable a mask the sea wears at the horizon to those on its surface. Not so the air, for aviation extends the range of vision and "wireless" affords quick communication. An intrepid corps of aviators in this case searched for some time without avail. The British squadrons united off Flamborough Head as arranged, then steered to the eastward; while the High Seas Fleet proceeded leisurely due south. Converging towards the same point, our advanced scouts sighted the enemy on the morning of the eighth, about midway across the North Sea, in latitude 54.

They reported a large force advancing in a southerly direction. The two Fleets about to meet comprised the following vessels:

60 THE BATTLE OF THE NORTH SEA

BRITISH FLEET

BATTLESHIPS

<i>Benbow</i> (Flag)	<i>Marlborough</i> (Flag)
<i>Ajax</i>	<i>Iron Duke</i>
<i>Audacious</i>	<i>Conqueror</i>
<i>King George V</i>	<i>Thunderer</i>
<i>Hercules</i>	<i>Colossus</i>
<i>Orion</i>	<i>Collingwood</i>
<i>Vanguard</i>	<i>St. Vincent</i>
<i>Temeraire</i>	<i>Dreadnought</i>
<i>Hibernia</i> (Flag)	<i>Africa</i> (Flag)
<i>Britannia</i>	<i>Hindustan</i>
<i>Zealandia</i>	<i>Commonwealth</i>
<i>Dominion</i>	<i>King Edward</i>
<i>Queen</i>	<i>Prince of Wales</i>
<i>Implacable</i>	<i>Venerable</i>
<i>Bulwark</i>	<i>Irresistible</i>

BATTLE AND ARMoured CRUISERS

<i>Tiger</i>	<i>Lion</i>
<i>Queen Mary</i>	<i>Princess Royal</i>
<i>Indefatigable</i>	<i>New Zealand</i>
<i>Defence</i>	<i>Shannon</i>
<i>Minotaur</i>	<i>Warrior</i>
<i>Achilles</i>	<i>Black Prince</i>

SCOUTS

<i>Falmouth</i>	<i>Boadicea</i>
<i>Birmingham</i>	<i>Bellona</i>
<i>Lowestoft</i>	<i>Blonde</i>

DESTROYERS

<i>Swift</i>	<i>Contest</i>
<i>Zulu</i>	<i>Ardent</i>
<i>Viking</i>	<i>Spitfire</i>
<i>Nubian</i>	<i>Sparrowhawk</i>
<i>Maori</i>	<i>Ambuscade</i>
<i>Crusader</i>	<i>Midge</i>
<i>Hardy</i>	<i>Lynx</i>
<i>Garland</i>	<i>Owl</i>
<i>Fortune</i>	<i>Victor</i>

GERMAN FLEET

BATTLESHIPS

<i>Oldenburg</i> (Flag)	<i>Kaiser</i> (Flag)
<i>Thuringen</i>	<i>Friedrich der Grosse</i>
<i>Helgoland</i>	<i>Kaiserin</i>
<i>Ostfriesland</i>	<i>König Albert</i>
<i>Rheinland</i>	<i>Archduke Luithpold</i>
<i>Posen</i>	<i>E. Weissenburg</i>
<i>Westfalen</i>	<i>Neuban</i>
<i>Nassau</i>	<i>E. Friedrich Wilhelm</i>
<i>Schlesien</i> (Flag)	<i>Schleswig Holstein</i> (Flag)
<i>Hanover</i>	<i>Pommern</i>
<i>Lothringen</i>	<i>Deutschland</i>
<i>Hessen</i>	<i>Preussen</i>
<i>Braunschweig</i>	<i>Elsass</i>
<i>Mechlenburg</i>	<i>Schwaben</i>
<i>Wettin</i>	<i>Zähringen</i>
<i>Barbarossa</i>	<i>Wittelsbach</i>

BATTLE AND ARMoured CRUISERS

<i>Seydlitz</i>	<i>Goeben</i>
<i>Von der Tann</i>	<i>Moltke</i>
<i>Blücher</i>	<i>Gneisenau</i>
<i>Scharnhorst</i>	<i>Fürst Bismarck</i>
<i>Roon</i>	<i>Yorck</i>

SCOUTS

<i>Magdeburg</i>	<i>Augsburg</i>
<i>Breslau</i>	<i>Stralsund</i>
<i>Strassbourg</i>	<i>Irene</i>

TWENTY DESTROYERS

The casualties to his ships at Rosyth obliged the British Admiral to reorganise his Fleet, but he maintained the six battle-cruisers as a fast squadron of observation. He now directed it to advance and

cover his retreating scouts, as they appeared in danger of being overhauled by the enemy's heavy cruisers. He desired also exact information of the strength and formation of the opposing Fleet ; at the same time cautioning Rear-Admiral Winter—who had his flag in the *Lion*—against getting engaged with the main body. This led to a smart action between the detached vessels, in which weight of armament told, for in a short time the *Von der Tann* was reduced to a helpless state.

Admiral Winter had now himself to retire, but previous to doing so, was enabled to report a fairly accurate description of the advancing force. Having discussed fully with all flag officers and captains his plans for fighting such an action as this, Sir George soon decided and communicated his intentions. Many wondered if he would make some historic signal. He was a man of few words, but they were usually to the point. Glancing at the sky, then the horizon, and finally scanning the perfect order of his ships, he turned to his Chief of Staff and said, "Thompson, I think it will come off to-day." The reply came short, "Yes, sir ; it ought to." At that moment the flag-lieutenant asked if he wished to make any other signals. Observing the eyes of those close at hand directed upon him with a look of attention, he divined their thoughts. He had never played to the gallery, and was not going to do so now. Smiling grimly he replied, "Yes, make 'The Commander-in-Chief counts upon a record battle-practice to-day.' " Even the

yeoman of signals smiled. After all it expressed his paramount thought. He had worked that Fleet up to its present state by unwearied attention and personal guidance. In vain his labour if the present targets required few repairs at the end of the exercise. When the message permeated through all the ships it elicited many characteristic remarks. Their general tenor was perhaps well expressed by an observation of the sight-setter at one of the flagship's big guns to his turret captain, "No romance about Uncle George, Bill. Don't you throw no shot away, or you'll lose your rate, if you don't the number of your mess." When a Fleet gives this relationship to its chief, you may be sure he is the right sort. It expresses admiration and awe as well as affection. No one less prone to overlook a fault—even a small one—than that universally recognised Fleet expert the late Sir Geoffrey Hornby; yet Uncle Geoff he was, and remains to this day, to all who served under him.

The eye of Uncle George was equally keen. His officers and men would do their very best.

The battle began at ten o'clock, and continued, with a lull in the middle of the day, until four o'clock. This is not a naval history, and I cannot emulate James in giving the proceedings of each vessel. The following despatch from the British Commander-in-Chief to the Secretary of the Admiralty sufficiently describes the action and its result.

"H.M.S. 'MARLBOROUGH,' AT SEA,

"8 p.m., October 8, 1914.

"SIR,

"In continuation of my despatch reporting the junction of my squadron with the ten vessels under Vice-Admiral Sir Thomas Tunncliffe, as well as the arrival of twelve additional destroyers to replace those rendered ineffective in the Firth of Forth, be pleased to inform my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty that, having reorganised the Fleet, I proceeded East in search of the enemy. Early this morning his vicinity was evident and reported by the *Falmouth* scouting ahead. I directed Rear-Admiral Winter to reconnoitre the approaching force as closely as possible with his six battle-cruisers. This service he performed in a highly meritorious manner, pressing his reconnaissance home until he had acquired exact information of my opponent's strength and other particulars. The enemy endeavoured to drive him off, sending all his armoured cruisers for the purpose. Though our vessels necessarily suffered considerably in the skirmish that ensued, Admiral Winter reported that one ship of the enemy—since ascertained to be the *Von der Tann*—was reduced to a state of non-resistance; but of course the Rear-Admiral could not then take possession of her. The enemy approached in two lines comprising thirty-two battleships, which practically embraced nearly the entire German Fleet of that class. His armoured and other cruisers, sixteen in number, were disposed in rear with a flotilla of about twenty destroyers. The ships composing this formidable force maintained admirable order, evidently the result of careful training and practice. Anticipating this formation, I had organised my Fleet in two divisions. Vice-Admiral Sir Richard Carter led the second division in the *Benbow*. Recognising the difficulty

of working and keeping together such a number of vessels after a certain period of the action, and having the fullest confidence in my Second in Command, I gave him a certain independence of movement to be exercised at his discretion under given circumstances. If the enemy continued in double column I proposed our two divisions should diverge and pass him on both sides, thus engaging his whole force. This plan had one advantage, that shots passing over might hit the opposite column. I estimated the speed of my slowest ship to be nearly 2 knots greater than that of his weakest unit. This would enable us to close if necessary to support each other.

“The action began at about ten o’clock at a distance of from 8,000 to 9,000 yards, and continued for two hours with increasing severity. By this time the enemy appeared to be in some confusion and to have suffered considerable damage. I took advantage of our distance having increased beyond effective range to give the ships’ companies a short rest for dinner, after which the combat was renewed. The enemy fought with conspicuous gallantry, making more than one attempt to close, so as to afford scope for their secondary armaments, but our superior speed prevented this being achieved, and our heavy ordnance put most of those guns out of action at an early stage. The accuracy and destructive effect of our big guns were irresistible, and by Divine favour I am able to report a most complete and glorious victory. By three o’clock the enemy’s lines were shattered and many of his ships completely disabled. The remainder, however, continued a brisk fire, until at four o’clock the German Commander-in-Chief, seeing further resistance to be hopeless, and desiring no doubt to preserve some portion of his Fleet, made off to the Eastward with such vessels—including fourteen

battleships—as remained in an efficient state. In view of approaching darkness I considered it desirable to refrain from pursuit, and take steps to assist our disabled vessels and secure the prizes, these consisting of eighteen battleships and four cruisers.

“Against an enemy who fought their ships with a skill and courage which commanded our general admiration such a result could not be attained without heavy losses to the Fleet under my command. I have to deplore—a feeling which I am sure will be shared by their Lordships and the whole country—the death of my gallant Second in Command, Sir Richard Carter. He was severely wounded by the piece of a heavy shell which struck the *Benbow*’s conning tower, and succumbed to his injuries towards the close of the day. He displayed great fortitude, expressing his satisfaction with events before breathing his last. He had given me such able and loyal support throughout that my grief is increased by his not surviving to be the recipient of my acknowledgments and his country’s appreciation. I regret also to report that Sir Thomas Tunncliffe was severely wounded in the right leg, necessitating amputation. I rejoice to say he is progressing favourably. I have also to lament the loss of my flag-captain, as also of the captains of the *Audacious*, *Collingwood*, *Britannia*, and *Venerable*. The casualties among the other officers and seamen are I fear very great, amounting to about 200 killed and 600 wounded; but complete lists will be forwarded in a further despatch. Since the close of the action our time has been fully occupied in making good immediate defects, and though not one of our ships was sunk some are so much knocked about as to appear past repair. I hope, however, unless the wind rises considerably, to tow them into port as well as the

captured vessels. No opportunity occurred for torpedo attack, the enemy's craft being kept at bay by our own cruisers and destroyers, while I was content to rest the issue upon my guns.

"I feel how inadequate this despatch is in conveying to their Lordships all the events of this glorious day, and will forward fuller details tomorrow. We are all exhausted and need rest, but I desired to send without delay this brief report of our operations, which is conveyed by H.M.S. *Queen Mary*.

"Under the circumstances it hardly seems necessary to dilate upon the conduct of those who have conduced to such a victory. Nothing could exceed the zeal and courage displayed by all, and never has the spirit which animated British seamen in the past been more pre-eminent than on the present occasion.

"In conclusion I beg to offer my congratulations to their Lordships on a victory which I trust will also afford His Majesty satisfaction, and assist to preserve the welfare and safety of his dominions.

"I have the honour to be, etc., etc.,

[Signed] "GEORGE WELLCOME."

Immediately after the termination of the battle the following general order was promulgated:

"The Commander-in-Chief desires to give his most sincere and hearty thanks to the flag officers, captains, officers, seamen, and Royal Marines under his command for their skilful and valuable support this day. He finds it difficult to express how highly he appreciates the exertions of all both before and during the action to render the utmost service to their Sovereign and country: conduct untarnished in any single instance. He shares

their grief in the loss of so many gallant comrades and shipmates, and expresses his deep sympathy with the wounded. He directs that as soon as circumstances permit a special service be held to render thanks for the victory granted to us and for our preservation in the hour of danger."

VIII

AFTER THE BATTLE

WORDS are wanting to describe the joy and enthusiasm caused throughout the country by the news of this great victory. It removed uncertainty, and dispelled fears fostered by oft-repeated allegations as to the decline of our naval strength. Only a few years before a great military authority at home had declared it to be "very little superior to the German Navy alone," and many believed him. It is not surprising that continual self-depreciation induced the same belief on the other side of the North Sea, and created a confidence not warranted by the facts.

When, therefore, Sir George Wellicome arrived safely at the Nore on the morning of the 10th, the rejoicings were renewed and he was accorded a reception such as greeted Lord Roberts on his return from South Africa. To bring this great Fleet home involved a task requiring as great skill as the battle. After stopping shot-holes near the water-line, and effecting minor repairs on the spot, the disabled vessels had to be taken in tow by the cruisers and least injured battleships; the whole force then proceeded at a rate of 6 knots, the

effective ships forming a guard in case of torpedo attack. With the captured vessels a large number of prisoners fell into our hands, among them two flag officers. Fortunately the weather remained calm and the enemy made no further attack. The influence of this battle was soon made manifest. Of course the idea of an invasion dropped at once, for though our main Fleet had suffered considerably it remained equal to such an emergency, and could now be reinforced by another squadron. We found the value of the Fleet Reserve for manning quickly additional vessels. In this we had over 20,000 prime seamen, who had served in the Fleet and responded at once to the call. Previously we relied on the mercantile marine, which gave us a Royal Naval Reserve, but not in the numbers, discipline, and training we desired. Discipline is more essential than training ; and it is only acquired by prolonged contact with a disciplined force. Gamekeepers with a month's annual training could hardly be considered an asset of value to an army on the score of their walking capacity and habit of carrying a gun. If you want a reliable reserve, whether of butlers, gardeners, soldiers, or sailors, you must get it from those who have formerly served in those capacities. People who abuse short service in Army or Navy do not realise this.

The Navy fortunately does not require a large reserve of men, as compared with an Army, and consequently can combine long and short service with the advantages of both. The nation no

longer feared an invasion. Was starvation more probable ?

The dependence of Great Britain upon supplies of food, especially wheat, from abroad, had long furnished matter for the alarmists. They pictured hostile cruisers and armed merchant steamers suddenly appearing upon the ocean tracks, dealing fatal blows to our commerce. The ordinarily harmless trading steamer was at any moment, and in every locality, to quickly transform herself into a warship and join in the work of destruction. Though we convey explosives in cargo ships, special magazines and stringent regulations are attached to the process. This seems to have escaped the observation of those who stated every German steamer carried an arsenal. The enemy was credited, moreover, with enough steam tonnage to transport an army. Could it do this, and at the same time send forth a Fleet of commerce-destroyers ? These must either pursue their mission in the North Sea, or work outside it. In the latter case they would have to pass through the Straits of Dover or round the north of Scotland. If we are to allow only a moderately intelligent handling of war problems by our Naval Administration, and a Fleet not reduced to that of a third-rate Power, few can assert the operation an easy one, or our geographical position other than an advantage in dealing with it. Of course we could not expect to entirely prevent losses in our mercantile marine, and they occurred at an early stage, for we were

not able at once to shadow all hostile cruisers in foreign waters. I have not space to describe these occurrences, and the general result was unaffected by them. The scare predicted began naturally at once, but soon subsided. Rates of insurance will rise at the threat of war, and mount further when it begins. They did at the outbreak of war with Russia in 1854. Later the rate is governed by the measure of protection afforded. On this occasion the scare hardly reached the stage of panic, being arrested by news of the North Sea battle. Eventually no decrease of commerce resulted, for that also is only occasioned by inadequate protection. At the outset some shipowners talked of transferring their vessels to a neutral flag, but the obstacles to this measure soon became apparent. Only a powerful neutral would venture on a deal, and the price offered was so low, owners came to the conclusion that retention, even with a high rate of insurance, was preferable. Other nations had no surplus seamen to work any sudden large addition to their mercantile marines. What the *Alabama* did, fifty years ago, led people to imagine many *Alabamas* pursuing their career unchecked. They forgot—if they ever learnt—how unprovided the Northern States were at the outset with vessels suitable for the occasion. How different the conditions now, especially one already alluded to, the superiority of speed of warships over commercial steamers! Even the *Mauretania* and *Lusitania*, where the Government paid heavily to

obtain, when desired, two auxiliary war-vessels of 25 knots, are surpassed by the 30-knot battle-cruisers. The steamers of any mercantile marine with a speed of 22 knots and upward are few in number. One or two, quickly equipped and sent forth by the enemy to reduce our imports, had a short career; and the price of bread kept within moderate bounds. As supplies arrived with fair regularity, the nation concluded that expedients for stimulating the growth of corn could furnish no substitute for an inefficient police of the seas. To resort to them was simply to admit a doubt which should not exist. The nation realised also by practical observation, as our rulers did nearly three hundred years ago, when we fought so vigorously against the Dutch, who fully recognised it also, that the result of naval war depends on decisive Fleet actions. All minor operations, as raids, expeditions, and interruption to commerce, are subservient to the shattering of main force.

In those days we concentrated our own in the North Sea and did not suffer it to be diverted elsewhere, or depleted to guard less vital interests abroad. We would not even detach warships for convoy. The merchants complained at first, but eventually admitted the Government to be right and apologised to the Admiral in command for their demands, saying: "The Company know very well that His Majesty's Fleet have been masters of the sea this whole summer, and could not well have been so if they had been carved into

squadrons for the convoy of trade." These pregnant words are to be found in the life of the first Earl of Sandwich, then in command of our Fleet. It required a war three hundred years later to again teach the sound principle of concentration not dispersion, yet a short time before the man who carried it out here as a precautionary measure received blame rather than approval.

The war demonstrated also that no substitute on land can set "free our Navy to perform its legitimate duty," nor is it tied to our shores in the absence of such a substitute unless too weak to meet the enemy at sea. When Napoleon threatened to cross with 180,000 soldiers, we did not station all our ships along the coast, but tied them up to his squadrons—many miles away—instead. Trafalgar, fought off the coast of Spain, secured home defence. It would have done so equally if the Fleets had met in the West Indies with the same result. This is not intended to disparage praiseworthy attempts to increase our military forces, but to correct one of the arguments used by zealous advocates.

After the events described, the war languished for a time, while each belligerent prepared to strike in other directions. The Mediterranean seemed to offer a favourable arena: at least German writers had pointed out years before that a joint Austrian and Italian expedition might easily dispossess us of Egypt. Italy, however, was averse to taking active measures against us, and evinced

little eagerness in the matter. France and Russia meantime became restless. The attitude of Germany towards Denmark, and the infringement of neutrality by the use made of her ports, evoked considerable resentment in that country. She could do no more than protest, unless supported by a powerful combination. If France, Russia, and England each landed 60,000 men in Denmark, these, combined with her own excellent army, would constitute a formidable force for attack or defence. It required command of the sea in Baltic and North Sea, and we could reinforce the Russian Fleet if necessary. With hostile armies also on eastern and western frontiers, Germany would have no easy task if the quarrel spread, even with the help of Austria and Italy. Europe seemed on the verge of universal strife, with its awful consequences. Mercifully wise and moderate counsels prevailed. The King of Italy, as a mediator acceptable to both sides, succeeded in getting them to agree to an Armistice, preparatory to a Conference. We had no desire to prolong the conflict. Though so far successful, our terms were not difficult to meet. We wanted no territory: we raised no question of indemnity. Two points only seemed essential—compensation to individuals unjustly treated—the display of a little better temper, in fact. Secondly, we desired a concrete recognition of our maritime position and some limitation of forces not vital to the security of an Empire only to be overcome on land.

A Conference was arranged, and met at Berne. Germany, somewhat chastened in spirit, did not offer great opposition to our demands, but effected some modifications. She also was not keen on a continuance of hostilities. They had begun too soon. Her prosperity up to that moment resulted largely from her trade with this country. The sale of cheap goods to us enabled her to build a portion of the Fleet whose dimensions caused the mischief. When this source of supply should cease, by a duty imposed on such manufactures, a powerful incentive to amicable relations would be removed. Under these circumstances, after some days' discussion an agreement was reached, and peace proclaimed.

Short though the duration of war was, it taught us many valuable lessons. An illuminating report by Sir George Wellicome on the North Sea battle settled many disputed points. At various times experts had advocated the abolition of armour for ships on the ground that the gun would always beat it. Following the saying of an eminent Admiral that the best defence is an overwhelming fire from your own guns, they suggested substituting additional armament for the weight of armour. A general belief also prevailed that with the terrible weapons employed many ships would be quickly sunk in a well-contested action.

Armour, however, in this battle played an important part in refuting both these assumptions, for the simple reason that it was seldom struck

direct, but generally at an angle. This gave the projectile a greater thickness to penetrate, or tended to deflect it. Obviously only penetration at the water-line to considerable extent would produce sinking, and the water-line is a small target compared with the remaining area of the hull. Hence the immunity from sinking in this action, and no gale after it, produced a different story. Of course lighter guns suffice if no armour is carried. Its use obliges your possible adversary to mount a heavy armament, and you trust to beat him at that.

We learnt also the absolute necessity of having as little top hamper as possible, liable—if wrecked—to fall on and obstruct the guns. This was the principal objection to heavy tripod masts, and the German ships suffered less with their pole masts in this respect than ourselves. Comparison of damage effected by a given number of hits on different ships demonstrated the advantage of separating turrets as far as practicable, but did not disturb the conclusions on which we mounted heavy guns in pairs and limited them to ten. Indeed, some advocated a reduction in number and increase in size. The big ship had justified her existence. The torpedo sustained its reputation as a deadly weapon at short range, but disappointed those enthusiastic supporters who claimed it would influence Fleet actions even at long range. The daring attack upon our squadron at Rosyth showed, however, the necessity of devising further pro-

tection to the hull of ships under water. This led to drastic modifications in naval architecture.

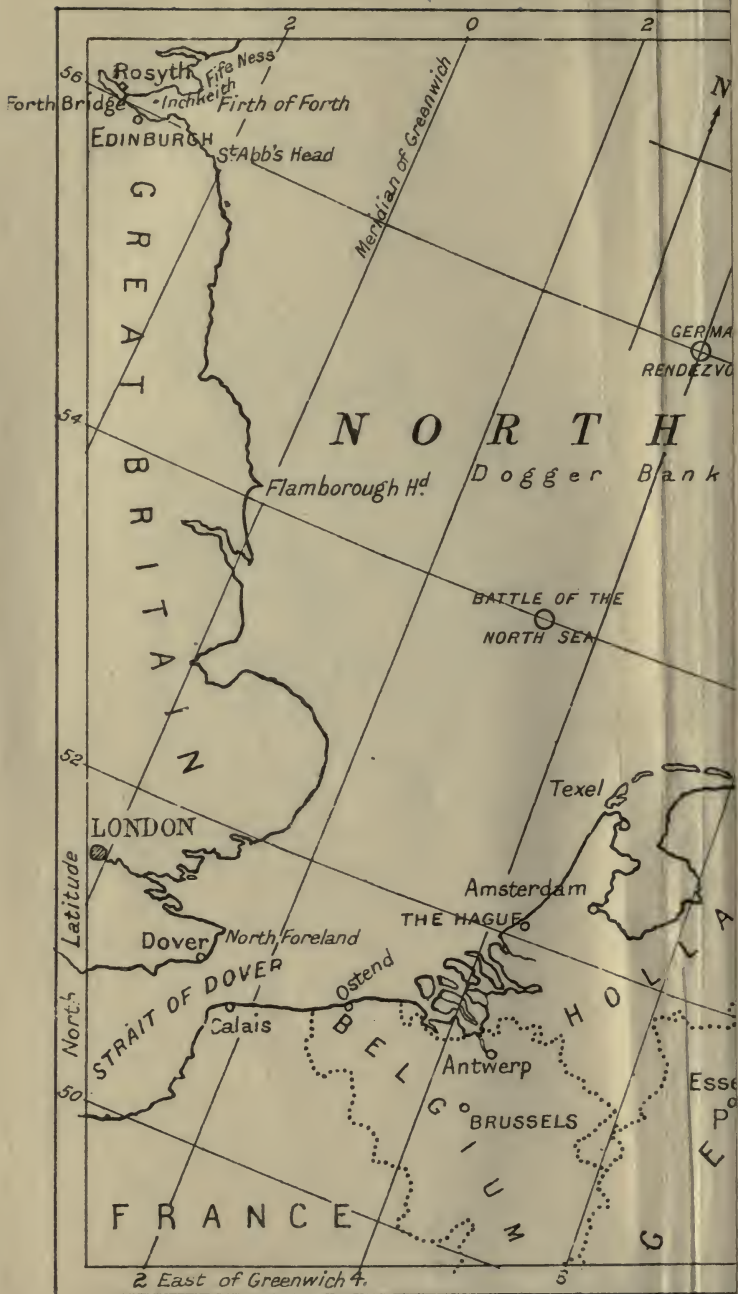
We experienced no lack of men, but the national enthusiasm was such that a movement began for the adoption of universal service in the Fleet! What had occurred with us excited sufficient alarm to stimulate patriotism, but it was a blue-water patriotism. If we did not take advantage of it to the fullest extent, the Government found no difficulty in obtaining additional funds for naval purposes, for we reverted to the old standard of twice as many ships of the line as the next strongest maritime Power. We required a larger margin to produce a general sense of security.

Finally this war welded the Empire together in a way not attainable by any number of conferences. The moment the news was flashed abroad offers of assistance came from all of our Dominions, followed by immediate action. In Far Eastern waters Australia furnished a fine contingent of troops for the reduction of Kiao Chiaou, in conjunction with our squadron out there; also placing her young Navy at the Admiral's disposal. Canada sent to us seamen formed in that excellent school, their coast fishing industry, and trained on the station. South Africa gave most gratifying evidence of loyalty and goodwill.

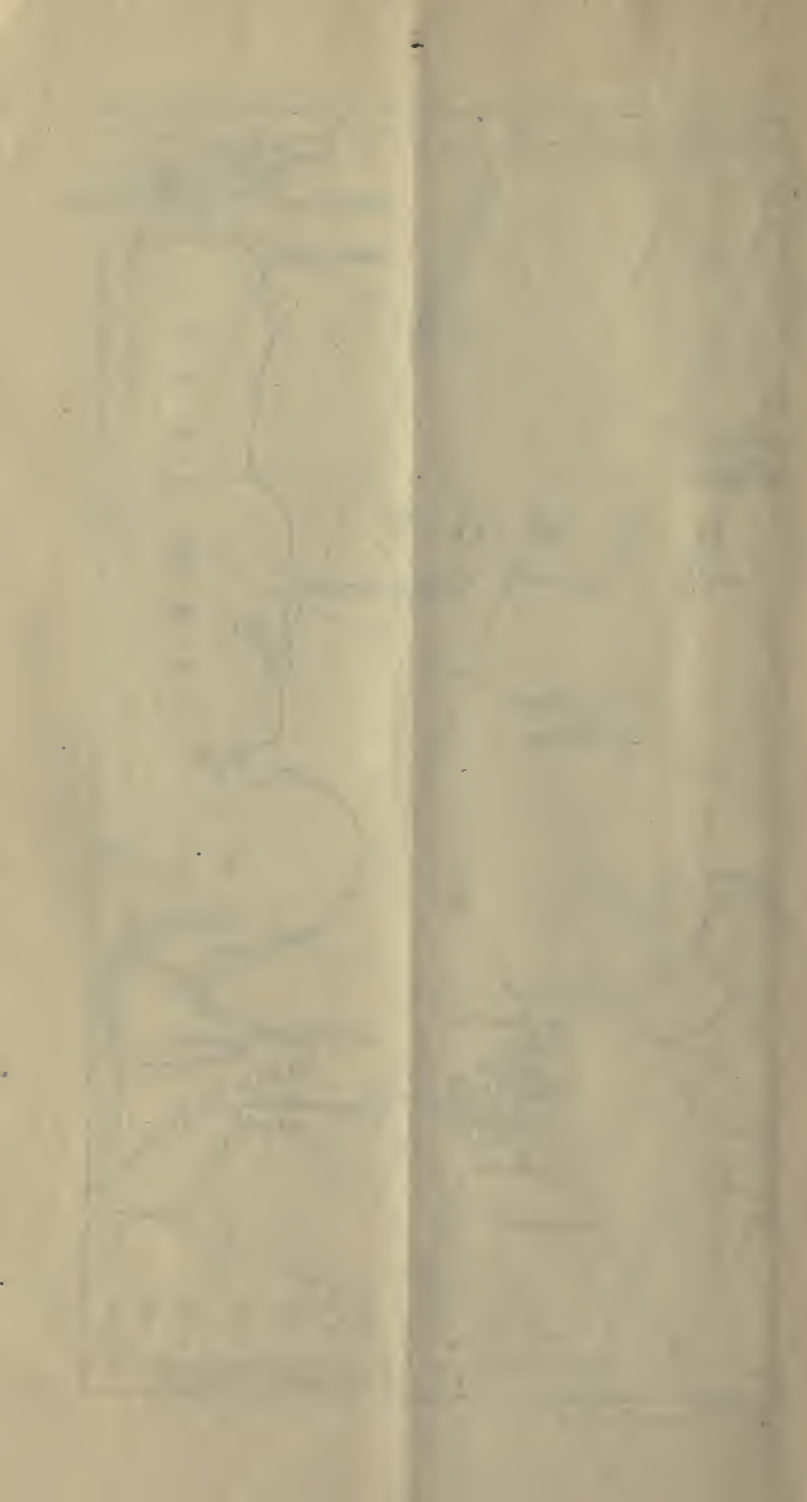
What created most impression in these parts was the fact of a Dominion ship taking part in the great battle. Manned largely by natives of New Zealand, the ship of that name had borne a con-

spicuous part on this occasion. She had fought with the British Navy and shared its triumph. The death-roll and wounded list of this ship, though grievous, sent a thrill of pride through that distant land, for it showed a forward place in the fray. Mourning with us the fallen, they had earned a right to share our joy. A feeling of generous envy caused a reaction in other localities. A general desire arose now for one Fleet in which all portions could serve, and which would belong to them as well as to us. To form part of a great Imperial Navy now appealed most to them. The difficulties of separate Fleets had begun to manifest themselves. Discipline is of slow growth, engendered by tradition as well as social conditions. Men accustomed to freedom of life do not readily respond to it unless placed where discipline is universally accepted and practised. The maintenance, organisation, and replenishment of small Fleets are not easy or economical. Swift travelling at sea and the telegraph have brought distant lands near, facilitating closer union for defence. With all willing to overcome obstacles they soon vanished. An Imperial Fleet did not preclude local training establishments and other institutions. Nor is it essential to confine warship construction to the United Kingdom. India used to furnish vessels; even Malta of recent years has built a cruiser. It is only extending decentralisation, of which an additional base in Scotland is an example. The imperative need is that all should be worked on a

common basis, and controlled by one central organisation. The question of contribution took some time to arrange, each locality requiring separate consideration, but an agreement satisfactory to all was reached. Admission of representatives from the Dominions to all departments of the Admiralty, and an increase to the Board, gave a share in control; while an Imperial Council gave a voice in policy to those growing nations keen to preserve the integrity of the Empire. Previous to this agreement it had been stated that as against a coalition of Powers we could not oppose to it a Navy capable of holding its own. An investigation, however, into what the Empire so organised was capable, of afforded astonishing results: efficient squadrons in every sea—so important for training; a considerable accession of line-of-battle strength; and other advantages. The old country thus derived renewed strength from the stout arms of her kinsmen beyond the seas, and, free from anxiety externally, its rulers could devote themselves to ameliorating further the condition of their people.







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